## *Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts*

No significant unavoidable adverse impacts related to hazardous materials are expected.

# Aesthetics

This section documents existing visual resources in the project area, identifies the effects on these resources and on views of these resources that would be caused by the alternatives under consideration, and discusses possible mitigation measures to offset these effects. Visual resources may include landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and man-made development (buildings, bridges, parks, gardens). These resources are considered in the context of the project area's overall visual character (i.e., diversity and continuity of visual resources) and visual quality (i.e., vividness and intactness of views).

## *Affected Environment*

### Visual Elements

Downtown Redmond is located near the confluence of the Sammamish River and Bear Creek. Most downtown development is on the valley floor just east of the Sammamish River. Steep slopes rise from the valley floor on the west side of the river. Similar slopes exist on the east side of the valley further from the downtown core. The Sammamish River and Bear Creek have both been artificially channelized within earthen dikes to control meandering and flooding. However, a project is underway to reestablish Bear Creek's natural floodplain of near Downtown Redmond.

**Sammamish River**

The Sammamish River and Bear Creek offer water views, but these are partially channelized, as mentioned previously. Views of these waterways are only visible from short distances. However, the streams also support riparian vegetation, including small trees and shrubs that are visible from further away and create a linear visual element. Leary Way and Redmond Way cross the Sammamish River within the project area.

Other water resources include the water quality ponds constructed in the Redmond Town Center (RTC) open space. This L-shaped, 44-acre parcel partially consists of the remains of the golf course on which RTC was constructed, and is a primary visual resource within the urban core. It supports open grassy areas and large trees. Views of the Sammamish River and Bear Creek are more open in this area. The RTC and Bear Creek Trails also cross this area, providing access to the open space and creating visual elements in and of themselves.

South of Leary Way, the RTC open space is more heavily treed, with dense stands of large evergreens. This densely treed area continues on to private land north of Leary Way and provides habitat for a heron rookery. Stationary viewers occasionally catch glimpses of herons in this area.

Apart from these streams and the open space, the Bear Creek Parkway project area is characterized by primarily by urban development. RTC and the "Old Town" (the original downtown) are urban elements with distinct visual qualities. Old Town consists primarily of one to two-story commercial buildings with street-front parking. Old Town has a historic area with brick and other buildings dating to from the turn of the century. In contrast, Town Center was built more recently and has higher-rise commercial buildings constructed of modern materials with central parking areas.

**RTC Open Space**

**Redmond Old Town**

**Redmond Town Center**

The BNSF Railroad corridor physically and visually separates the Old Town and RTC. Although no longer in use, the corridor retains an industrial character and creates another (very different) linear visual element. Leary Way and Redmond Way cross the BNSF Railroad within the project area.

Some residential development flanks the Sammamish River on both sides of Leary Way. These are high-density condominium developments.

In general, four visual "landscape units" can be defined in the project area: 1) Old Town, 2) RTC, 3) RTC Open Space (including the Sammamish River and Bear Creek), and 4) the BNSF corridor.

**BSNF Railroad**

**Visual Character and Quality**

The predominant visual character within the project area is the flat river valley with distant views of the river terraces. Most views include some type of development that is typically rectilinear in form. However, view diversity is increased by the presence of open space and wooded areas that support various forms of vegetation and wildlife. These contrasting landscape components contribute to the vividness (or memorability) of the total landscape. The different mix of elements within the downtown area has affected the intactness and unity of views. Coherence with the natural environment is enhanced by the linear open space elements following the waterways. However, unity is lessened by the different visual patterns of the old and new sections of downtown and the industrial railroad corridor.

## *Environmental Impacts*

From scoping efforts it was determined that open space and trees are considered important visual resources to Redmond residents. This is primarily due to the relative uniqueness of these elements within the downtown environment. These elements are perceived differently when considered from the perspective of roadway users versus roadway neighbors. Although a roadway that passes through areas of open space and trees would have high-quality views for the user, views of the open space and trees from areas away from the roadway could be compromised.

Most views of the new Bear Creek Parkway would be from adjacent commercial and recreational areas. Some views from residences located on the west side of the Sammamish River may be affected, but these views are more distant. The following sections describe the effects of each alternative on visual resources and on views of those resources. The buildings on the King County shop site are scheduled for removal independent of the Bear Creek Parkway Extension Project, so these elements would be removed under all of the alternatives including the No Action Alternative.

Visual impacts during construction would be similar for all alternatives and would include the presence of construction equipment, potential materials stockpiles, and vegetation removal. These impacts would be temporary.

### No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would not affect any visual resources or views of those resources. Views would remain the same as the existing condition.

### Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would bisect the existing RTC open space area, and some of that space would be converted to roadway use. The alternative would remove some low-lying vegetation and portions of the RTC trail south of Leary Way. Two of the existing RTC water quality ponds would be affected, but new ponds would also be constructed. North of Leary Way, the new roadway would follow the existing 159th Place NE alignment and would widen and slightly realign this roadway. Street-side parking, some roadside vegetation, and at least one business would be displaced.

For roadway users, Alternative 1 would provide high-quality views of the open space and the Bear Creek and Sammamish River waterways. The wooded area south of Leary Way would also be visible to roadway users. North of Leary Way, views would not change substantially.

For roadway neighbors, Alternative 1 would disrupt the unity and intactness of the open space visual element. A new roadway would be an inharmonious visual element within this context. This element would affect recreational facility and trail users' views. North of Leary Way, views would not be changed substantially.

### Alternative 2

Alternative 2 would follow the existing Bear Creek Parkway alignment north past 162nd Avenue NE and remove some of the large trees northeast of 162nd Avenue NE. The existing 162nd Avenue NE roadway would be removed and returned to non-pavement surface. North of Leary Way, the roadway would curve to the west around the wooded area containing the heron rookery and intersect with 159th Place NE. The southern portion of the King County shop site would be converted to roadway use, as would at least three businesses. 159th Place NE would be widened from the new intersection of Bear Creek Parkway to Leary Way, removing some street-front parking and vegetation.

For roadway users, Alternative 2 would provide high-quality views of the open space and wooded areas to the west and south of the roadway. Views to the north and east would be of the railroad corridor and downtown development. Because the roadway would follow the margins of several different visual landscape units, views for the user would remain intact but would be varied.

For roadway neighbors, Alternative 2 would affect views of the large trees south of Leary Way and east of 162nd Avenue NE from the public market, and to a lesser extent from RTC. Views of the wooded area/heron rookery north of Leary Way from downtown would be changed, but no important visual elements would be removed. The new roadway would replace views of the King County shop site. However, these views would continue to be across the railroad corridor, which would remain unchanged.

### Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would have the same alignment as Alternative 2 south of Leary Way, and would also remove the trees northeast of 162nd Avenue NE. The existing 162nd Avenue

NE roadway would be removed and returned to non-pavement surface. North of Leary Way, the roadway would head generally north across a portion of the King County shop site parcel, the BNSF Railroad, at least three businesses, and Cleveland Street, eventually connecting to Redmond Way at the 161st Avenue NE intersection.

For roadway users, views south of Leary Way would be of uninterrupted open space to the west and Town Center to the east. The new roadway would follow the margins of both these landscape units. North of Leary Way, the roadway would cut across the railroad and downtown units, creating somewhat disjointed views for the user. However, once across the railroad, views would be similar to those from other downtown streets.

For roadway neighbors, Alternative 3 would have the same impacts as Alternative 2 on views of the trees from the public market and to a lesser extent, views from RTC. Views of the railroad corridor would be affected by the addition of the roadway crossing. Views of the roadway within the downtown area would be changed, but would remain similar in character to other views within the core.

**Alternative 4**

Alternative 4, because it combines features of Alternatives 2 and 3, would have similar visual impacts. Like Alternatives 2 and 3, Alternative 4 would follow the same alignment south of Leary Way and would have the same impacts on the trees northeast of 162nd Avenue NE. North of Leary Way, Alternative 4 would follow the margins of the heron rookery and the railroad landscape units, connecting with 159th Place NE. The southern portion of the King County shop site would be converted to roadway use. In Alternative 4, a northern extension of the roadway would cross the King County shop site parcel, the BNSF Railroad corridor, at least three businesses, and Cleveland Street, and connect to Redmond Way. The alignment would be somewhat different than in Alternative 3 but would have similar impacts.

For roadway users, Alternative 4 would also provide high-quality views of the open space and wooded areas to the west and south of the roadway. Views to the north and east would be of the railroad corridor and downtown development, and the northern extension of the roadway. Because the roadway would follow the margins of several different visual landscape units, views for the user would remain intact but would be varied. Views from the northern extension would be similar to views from other downtown streets.

For roadway neighbors, Alternative 2 would affect views of the large trees south of Leary Way and east of 162nd Avenue NE from the public market and to a lesser extent from RTC. Views of the wooded area/heron rookery north of Leary Way from downtown would be changed and even opened up somewhat by the northern extension. The removal of buildings would allow a more direct view of the trees from 161st Avenue NE. Views of the King County shop site parcel would be replaced by the east-west and north-south roadways. Views of the railroad corridor would be affected by the addition of the roadway crossing. Views of the roadway within downtown would be changed, but would remain similar in character to other views within the core.

**Summary**

In summary, Alternative 1 would have the most noticeable and disruptive visual impacts. Views from the roadway would be of good quality, but views toward the open space would be completely changed. This would especially impact trail users,

whose appreciation of the area is closely linked to the quality of the visual experience. Roadway users, because they are traveling at high speeds, tend to have less exposure and awareness of their surroundings than neighbors. Therefore, neighbors tend to be more sensitive to visual impacts than users.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would all remove some large trees and in that way have negative visual impacts. These trees are considered unique resources within the downtown area. Alternative 2 would have the least visual impact because it generally follows the margins of several landscape units, provides users with uninterrupted views of all units, and does not significantly affect views of any unit for neighbors, except at the public market. Alternatives 3 and 4, by crossing the railroad corridor, do disrupt the continuity of this element and would be somewhat visually intrusive to corridor users.

## *Mitigation Measures*

Potential mitigation measures to offset the visual impacts of the build alternatives include vegetation replacement, incorporation of compatible visual elements into the roadway design, and enhancements to better link the downtown area's distinct visual landscape units.

The number of trees removed will be limited to those necessary for the roadway's safe construction and operation. The RCP (Policy NE-70) states that significant trees removed during the course of construction will be replaced on site. Therefore, any trees removed during construction of the Bear Creek Parkway will be replaced. Policy NE-74 also states that street trees will be provided along all arterial streets, where practical. The accompanying Policy NE-75 states that trees will be planted in planters or tree wells between the curb and sidewalk, where feasible. These should create a "unified image for the street", provide an effective canopy, and minimize water consumption. These trees shall be deciduous shade trees suitable for sidewalk plantings. If practical, the new roadway will be tree-lined.

Other potential mitigation measures include incorporation of visually compatible elements within the roadway design. These include median plantings, street lighting, and signing. Public input would be important in identifying appropriate elements and how to incorporate them into the roadway. Possible design elements include trees, herons, and other natural resources, or elements reflecting the downtown area's historic character.

The new roadway also presents an opportunity to enhance the downtown area's visual character. Bear Creek Parkway would function as a gateway to Redmond, and could potentially bring together the downtown's visual elements, including the urban development and the natural resources of the river, trees, and wildlife. This gateway could be physically represented by signage, sculpture, landscaping, or a combination of these elements.

## *Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts*

Some trees and vegetation would be lost under any of the build alternatives. Although replacement trees and landscaping would be provided, this will not replace the loss of mature trees.

# Recreation

This section documents the existing recreation resources in the project area, identifies how the alternatives being considered would affect these resources, and discusses possible mitigation measures to offset these effects. For the purposes of this project, recreation resources include open space, parks, and recreational trails. Open space and parks are differentiated by their intended function: open space is intended to provide natural, undeveloped space for both passive and active recreation. Open space is often designated to protect important environmental resources and provide links in a regional wildlife habitat network. Parks are typically developed (landscaped) spaces intended for more active recreation by providing sporting, trail, and other facilities. However, parks often contain undeveloped areas that are similar to open space.

## *Affected Environment*

Recreation resources within the project area include the RTC Trail and Open Space, the Bear Creek Trail, Slough House Park, the Sammamish River Trail, Luke McRedmond Landing, and Riverwalk. Marymoor Park is a major regional facility located south of SR 520, just outside of the project area (see Figure 3.9).

**RTC Open Space**

The RTC Trail and Open Space is a 44-acre parcel dedicated to the City as a condition of the development of RTC. The parcel includes the RTC water quality ponds and a loop trail that connects RTC with the Sammamish River Trail and the new Bear Creek Trail. The parcel includes the remains of an old golf course, and contains both landscaped and natural (wooded) areas. The RTC Open Space also includes the Bear Creek drainage, which is currently channelized although there are plans to reestablish the natural floodplain in this area. A portion of the Bear Creek Trail was recently constructed along this drainage to the south of Bear Creek Parkway.